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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a counseling program in which emphasis is on the developmental approach to guidance. The author contends that the counseling emphasis in our schools today is remedial that the troubled youngsters receive the most attention from teachers and counselors. The DUSO program is for use with all children and is designed to help the child become more aware of the relationship between himself, other people and his needs and goals. Materials for the DUSO Kit are contained in a metal carrying case including a manual, two story books, records or cassettes, posters, puppet activity cards, puppets, puppet props, role playing cards, and group discussion cards. DUSO is structured so that teachers may use the program on a daily basis throughout the school year or select certain activities to fit the specific needs of their group. The author also describes a pilot project in one school district where 12 "troubled" children and six "well-adjusted" children met with two teachers for one hour, once a week, using the DUSO program. Results were favorable. (HMV)

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DEVELOPING UNDERSTANDING OF SELF AND OTHERS (DUSO) IN
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN

by

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Introduction

We all recognize that patterns of behavior tend to become more firmly established with the maturity of the person. By the time a child has reached adolescence, changing behavior patterns is often very difficult. Problems that have been emerging through the elementary grades frequently become acute in junior or senior high school. As a result, most secondary school counsellors find themselves spending a major portion of their time working with so-called "problem children". Because of the difficulty of changing the established ways of behaving of these "problem" high school students, a disproportionately small group of students use up most of the counsellor's time.

The New Hope

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I realize that the field of education has been somewhat like a teenager who becomes totally committed to each new fad that comes along. Education has over the years been influenced by various theories, movements or fads. The truth of the matter is that educators who are dedicated to children search urgently for better ways to help them. Wrenn (Faust, 1968), puts it very well when he suggests that a new theory, concept, or tools, under the spur of one's drive to find "something" seems so plausible that

it becomes the way. The enormous complexity of human nature and the naivety of our understanding of it tends to be overlooked in our keenness to follow the new "truth" in Education.

Examples of such movements are homogeneous grouping, team teaching, teaching machines, etc.. Included in these movements has been a whole cluster of "new truths" in the guidance area - group guidance, vocational guidance, homeroom guidance, personal counselling, group counselling, etc.. None of these is without merit. Indeed each has merit (Faust, 1968), but not enough merit for the total need. Each has contributed something to our slowly evolving understanding of human beings and how they learn and how they grow. Each becomes foolish only when we lose perspective.

A present surge of interest is in elementary school counselling. Elementary school counselling appears to many to be the new hope. My feeling is that as long as it is a hope for improvement, and is not considered a solution, it may indeed become a hope! Furthermore, I will cling to it as a hope only if the classroom teacher is a central figure in the program.

The Role of the Classroom Teacher

I am becoming more convinced than I have ever been before, that the classroom teacher must be the person who assumes the primary responsibility for guidance. It is the classroom teacher who spends the largest amount of time with the student (this is especially true in elementary school). The teacher has more opportunity than any other professional working with the child to become acquainted with the student's abilities and liabilities. It is the teacher who, in the final analysis, must carry out the greatest share of remedial measures and therapy, regardless of

other guidance personnel available. I am aware of the importance of specialized guidance personnel in the total program, and it is my hope that we as educators will become increasingly aware of the need for larger numbers of highly trained specialists to be available as consultants. However, the actual fact is that the classroom teacher has and probably always will have, the largest share of the guidance function. The DUSO program is based on the assumption that a classroom teacher can, and should, carry out many functions which are able to assist children to develop into happy, healthy, fully-functioning persons.

A story being told (Nevison, 1972) by people in mental health work illustrates our situation. Three fishermen noticed a body floating down the stream toward them. They hastily rescued the person and were able to resuscitate him. No sooner had they done so, when another body appeared - then another. Their efforts at rescue became pitifully inadequate until finally one of the fishermen started upstream to see what was pushing them in. In guidance, we too have many bodies - people unable to cope with the current of the stream. I expect it will always be important for us to operate as lifeguards and rescue those who are overwhelmed. No doubt it is important for us to exert more and more of our energy in a preventive program, that is, a program where we observe what is pushing them in and make an attempt to do something about it. But I suspect that our focus should not be on what is pushing them in, but rather on why they are not stronger swimmers! I am convinced that our greatest likelihood of payoff will be in a developmental program that strives toward producing stronger swimmers.

I am convinced that it is only to the extent that our elementary guidance program of the future turns away from crisis and prevention

approaches, and becomes, instead, developmental, that we will be able to make a significant contribution to creating a society of fully-functioning human beings. Only in this way can the dream of creating a better world be operationalized.

A Developmental Approach

I have already suggested that the three phases of guidance are, the developmental, the preventive, and the remedial. The developmental phase tries to determine potentials of children and establish a physical and emotional climate conducive to optimum development of those potentials. Barr (1958) has proposed an analogy which helps me to appreciate the developmental phase of guidance. He suggests that like plants in a garden, most children will survive their growing-up process and become mature individuals if given a fair amount of care and a reasonably good environment. Both plants and children will develop their potential even more if optimum conditions for growth are provided. I expect it is obvious that I feel this phase of guidance, or perhaps it is better to say, this approach to guidance should be emphasized far more than it has been in the past. The DUSO program is a developmental approach to guidance, but prior to describing the program let me briefly comment on the remedial and preventive aspects of guidance. Perhaps, by doing this, the DUSO program can be seen from a more complete perspective.

In actual practice (Barr, 1958) the emphasis in our schools tends to be on the remedial because it is the troubled youngsters who are likely to receive the most attention from teachers, counsellors, and other specialized guidance personnel. The student who is a behavior problem, who is truant; who has trouble with his school work, or who is not adjusting in other ways, is likely to get special help. This "fix it" or

"pick up the pieces" aspect of guidance is important, but surely it is not the aspect which can give the greatest returns for the time and effort expended. Troubles which have taken years to come to full stature are not likely to respond quickly to therapy. Most of the time, the best that can be accomplished with this approach is to bring the person's behavior up to some minimally acceptable level.

School personnel who work from a preventive philosophy concern themselves with establishing conditions which will prevent problems from occurring. The accent then is on prevention of school failure, prevention of poor mental health, prevention of delinquency, etc..

I realize that the three approaches to guidance - developmental, preventive, and remedial - are not so separate and distinct that a particular school could choose to operate from a developmental approach totally and do no preventive or remedial work. In fact, the contrary is true. If the developmental approach is properly utilized it will automatically serve a preventive function as well as lessen the need for remedial guidance. It is for this reason that a program such as the DUSO program, which is based on a developmental philosophy, has so much to recommend its use. The DUSO program is for use with all children rather than simply the special child or the child in crisis.

Rationale and Objectives of the DUSO Program

Don Dinkmeyer, professor of Educational Psychology and Counselling at De Paul University, produced the DUSO program. The rationale and objectives presented here are his (Dinkmeyer, 1970, 9-12).

Developing an understanding of self and others is central to the process of education. The child is at once a thinking, acting, and feeling being. His thoughts and actions always involve feelings. He

may like some subjects, be excited about and interested in certain media, dislike doing routine drills or homework, be angry with a certain teacher or be intensively involved with a project.

The feelings which accompany learning have a significant effect on its results. If a child has positive feelings, he tends to be motivated toward the task, participates with a high degree of involvement, and is more likely to derive permanent gains from his efforts. Conversely, if his feelings are negative, he is poorly motivated, participates on a minimal basis, and is less likely to derive permanent gains from his efforts.

Thus, if education is to accomplish its goals, attention must be paid to the affective (feeling or emotional) as well as the cognitive (intellectual) domain. The social and emotional development of the child should not be considered incidental to his education. Developmental guidance is concerned with personalizing and humanizing the educational process for all students. It is an integral part of the teacher's role.

There is a growing body of evidence that the primary school years significantly influence the educational development of the child. Bloom (1964) summarized a number of longitudinal studies and indicated that approximately fifty per cent of general achievement at grade twelve had been reached by the end of grade three. He likewise underlined the significance of the early school years for the development of the child's attitude toward school and his subsequent pattern of achievement.

In a similar vein, Kagan and Moss (1962) have emphasized the importance of the primary years for the development of the child's attitudes, values, and involvement with the educative process. They found that many of the behaviors exhibited by the child between six to ten years were moderately good predictors of related behavior in early adulthood.

The child has social and emotional needs which frequently take precedence over his academic needs. These needs must be satisfied first if his time and energies are to be available for academic attainment (Prescott, 1957).

It is absolutely necessary then for the classroom teacher to arrange learning experiences in ways which strengthen the child's self-esteem and, by so doing, to meet his social, emotional, and academic needs.

DUSO is designed to help the child become more aware of the relationship between himself, other people, and his needs and goals. Through DUSO the child is helped to develop a sensitivity to the causal, purposive, and consequential nature of his behavior. As a child comes to perceive the purposes and goals of his behavior, he is more likely to recognize the basis of his faulty relationships with others.

A primary source of motivation is the child's self-concept which is derived in part from the attitudes toward him expressed by significant adults. If he is loved and accepted, then he tends to be self-confident and courageous. This enables him to develop an active-constructive approach to life in contrast to a passive or destructive one.

Each child is confronted with a variety of developmental tasks and social expectations. He approaches these expectations and tasks in terms of his own needs and his desire to be significant. He decides consciously or otherwise how he wishes to be known, and his behavior eventually becomes consistent with his concept of himself. Essential to this concept of self are the basic understandings which the child develops about himself and his world. It is the philosophy of the DUSO program that developmental tasks provide the goals for the classroom guidance process. The units revolve around eight developmental tasks which confront the individual

in the process of his development. The eight unit themes representing the developmental tasks are:

- I - Understanding and Accepting Self
- II - Understanding Feelings
- III - Understanding Others
- IV - Understanding Independence
- V - Understanding Goals and Purposeful Behavior
- VI - Understanding Mastery, Competence, and Resourcefulness
- VII - Understanding Emotional Maturity
- VIII - Understanding Choices and Consequences

DUSO Program

The materials for the DUSO kit are contained in a metal carrying case. These materials include: the manual, two story books, records or cassettes, posters, puppet activity cards, puppets, puppet props, role playing cards, and group discussion cards.

DUSO is structured so that teachers may use the program on a daily basis throughout a school year. On the other hand a teacher may select activities to fit the specific needs of her group.

The DUSO activities make extensive use of a listening, inquiry, experiential, and discussion approach to learning. The activities are quite varied, so the children's interest in the program is easily maintained.

Leduc Project

Goals. In that much experimentation had already been done with the DUSO program, it was not our purpose to check out the validity of the program. A number of research projects in the U.S.A. have demonstrated convincingly the usefulness of the program in achieving the objectives referred to above. So our purposes for doing this project were:

- (1) to become experientially acquainted with the program.
- (2) to observe the acceptability of the program to the teachers and administrators in a Canadian setting.
- (3) to observe how a selected group of primary grade youngsters

would respond to the program.

Procedures. Upon reception of approval from the School Superintendent, and the three Elementary School principals in the town of Leduc the project was begun. The three principals were asked to select several "troubled" youngsters from their respective primary grades. They were also asked to select several "well-adjusted" youngsters for the project. The final group selected consisted of twelve "troubled" children and six "well-adjusted" children. The main purpose for having the six "well-adjusted" children was to prevent any negative stigma being attached to the group.

For four months two teachers met with this group for one hour, once a week. The participating students were brought to the school at which we met by their principal or designate. I participated as an observer and consultant to the two teachers who acted as group leaders. Usually we met between sessions to discuss the previous session and to plan the next session.

Results. No objective data were gathered. However, from an observational viewpoint and from the reports of teachers who had students in the project, it was obvious that most of the participants profited from their experience in the group. While validation of the program was not one of the goals of the project, evidence accumulated during the weekly meetings indicates that the program is useful. The purposes stated under "goals" of this project were achieved. Several other findings were observed:

- (1) All but one of the teachers who had youngsters in the program responded enthusiastically to the program. One teacher was skeptical prior to the beginning of the project and remained so to the end.
- (2) Most of the teachers reported anecdotal data which indicated marked growth in the participating students. The children began

to become aware of their feelings, instead of attempting to ignore or deny them. They became sensitized to the commonness of their experiences and their feelings. As a result they found less need to waste their energy on defense mechanisms, and thereby became increasingly free to learn.

- (3) The program engenders a great deal of interest in primary grade children. The youngsters came to the group sessions with enthusiasm, and each week became totally involved and committed to the activities.

Recommendations. As a result of our experience in this project, and on the basis of my experience with the DUSO program in several other settings, I feel comfortable in making several recommendations:

- (1) I feel comfortable in recommending the use of DUSO with primary grade students.
- (2) I am convinced that any dedicated teacher can use the program effectively. However, I feel that the children would experience greater growth if the program was offered by a trained elementary school counsellor.
- (3) Whether it is a teacher or a counsellor who uses the program, it is worthwhile for the group leader to get feedback from a non-participating observer. We found the discussion sessions among the two teachers and myself an essential part of the program. It was during these sessions that we were able to plan activities for the children which tailor-made the program for these specific youngsters.
- (4) I feel that groups which choose to use the program would be wise to participate in at least a one-day in-service training session prior to launching the program.
- (5) If possible two leaders per group should be used. It is difficult for one leader to adequately observe each individual and at the same time initiate and lead the activities. An ideal situation would be for the classroom teacher and the elementary school counsellor to team up.

Starting a DUSO Program

After listening to my description of the DUSO program, your reaction might be: "This sounds like a pretty good idea, but it would be impossible to introduce such a class in my community. Heavens! Did you hear about the reaction to a proposed "Family Life Education" program for the High

School? Furthermore, I'm sure my principal would hesitate to give his approval on the grounds that this isn't on the official curriculum". This is a common initial response. It is, in fact, because of some hesitation which you may meet, that I suggest careful, long-term preparation on the part of the teacher and the counsellor who serves as his consultant. It is my observation that rarely will a principal or community reject a well-worked-out plan for educational exploration. If the objectives of the program are carefully delineated on paper, along with reasons for having it, a rationale for it, and some comment about the techniques you will be using, administrative consent will be almost automatic. Further insurance can be achieved if methods of evaluating the results are set out. Well-prepared, careful work will seldom be rejected by even the most conservative community.

For those of you who hesitate because the DUSO program isn't a subject covered in the curriculum guide, let me refer you to the Tentative Course Outline for Social Studies (Grades I - XII), January, 1969. In this guide it is stated that the following objectives are to be promoted:

- (1) Dignity of Man
- (2) Empathy
- (3) Loyalty
- (4) Justice
- (5) Equality, and
- (6) Freedom

And further on it states that students should develop the social skills of:

- (1) interpreting the feelings and ideas of others;
- (2) responding to the feelings and ideas of others in a manner appropriate to the occasion;
- (3) expressing one's own feelings and ideas to others; and
- (4) compromising and cooperating with others.

Even a cursory examination of the objectives of the DUSO program makes it abundantly clear that the DUSO program can serve as one way of working toward the objectives set out in the new social studies curriculum.

Recently, a Supervisor of Elementary Education who heard me give a talk about the DUSO program, came up to me after I had finished and reported with what appeared to be almost a sigh of relief that he had finally found a program that could help his teachers achieve the objectives which were expected of them.

Conclusion

Some people call me an idealist when I talk about creating happy, healthy, fully-functioning, self-actualizing people. But I am convinced that if we turn away from crisis and prevention approaches to a developmental approach we have an excellent chance of achieving that goal. I believe that man can become far more than we thought he could, and we can have a share in helping him achieve his potential. And that means that Education is not simply a holding operation, but rather this business that you and I are in is perhaps the most important business in the world. Only if we hold on to this developmental model can we contribute on revolutionary dimensions to a better world.

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